RANCHO SANTA ANA BOTANIC GARDEN

LEAFLETS

of

POPULAR INFORMATION

No. 3 April, 1938

LINANTHUS MONTANUS
SIERRA LINANTHUS

Prepared

by

RANCHO SANTA ANA BOTANIC GARDEN

of the

NATIVE PLANTS OF CALIFORNIA

Santa Ana Canyon

Orange County

California

No. 3 April 1938

LINANTHUS MONTANUS
SIERRA LINANTHUS

Polemoniaceae Phlox Family

Small annual a foot or so high, usually with simple erect stems. Leaves opposite , palmately-parted into 6 to 9 linear divisions $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ in. long, lightly ciliate. Pairs of leaves spaced 1 to 3 inches apart on the reddish-green somewhat wiry stems. Flowers 20 to 60 per terminal head, subtended by bracts similar to the leaves. Calyx lobes 5, membranous below, $\frac{1}{2}$ in. long, acicular. Corolla salverform; tube nearly 1 in. long; corolla lobes 5, obovate, 3/8 in. long, white to pinkish or pale lavender, often with darker spot at base or lacking, throat yellow. Stamens 5, inserted in the throat. Style 3-parted. Ovary 3-celled. Seeds several, small, becoming sticky when wet.

Linanthus montanus was first described by E. L. Greene in 1892 as a variety of L. ciliatus. Later he decided that it was a distinct species. His specimens came from the Sierra Nevada foothills. There are close to 30 kinds of Linanthus in California of which several are very beautiful. Some botanists combine Linanthus and several other related genera into one large genus Gilia, but we prefer to consider them as a separate genus.

One of the most pleasing sights in the Southern Sierra Nevada foothills from Tulare County northward is to see the Sierra Linanthus in bloom in May along the roadways in the open Blue Oak and Digger Pine belts. Often both sides of the road will be lined with masses of this lovely annual, which from a distance appear white, but upon closer inspection are mainly of a delicate orchid tone. The real treat is to stop and examine carefully the individual plants with their heads of flowers measuring a couple of inches across. In the wild the plants spring up quickly, bloom and are soon gone to be replaced by Godetias, Madias and other flowers equally beautiful. Thus the average flower lover is likely to see this Linanthus at its best in the wild only by a rare combination of fortuitous circumstances.

This species has apparently never been introduced into cultivation and so the plantings at Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden are the only source of information as to its suitability for horticulture. Our strain of the Sierra Linanthus was obtained in the Sierra Nevada foothills of Fresno County near Dunlap in 1933.

This plant has been called Mustang-Clover, but the name is inappropriate for such a lovely species. Accordingly, after seeing it so successful in cultivation, we have adopted the name Sierra Linanthus, for it is the most showy species of the Sierras.

Sierra Linanthus thrives in a sunny spot in loamy soil. It should be planted in the early fall where it is to bloom, either in rows or in beds. The seeds germinate in a week or two and will grow to heights of nearly 2 feet by early April. Flowers first appear in early April and continue for over a month. Cultivated plants are much more robust and produce many more flowers than any we have seen in the wild.

As a cut flower this is one of the finest of our California wild flowers. The individual flowers vary in their delicate orchid shadings and markings from plant to plant and even from flower to flower on the same plant or in the same head. In bouquets many flowers will open after cutting and in a cool room will last for nearly a week.

Many people are only satisfied with huge individual flowers but the massed effect of the flowers of this plant which are less than an inch across should satisfy even those persons who measure beauty with a ruler.

We heartily recommend the Sierra Linanthus as an early spring annual and would like to see it popularized and introduced into horticulture.

RANCHO SANTA ANA BOTANIC GARDEN

Of The Native Plants of California.

Established 1927

In Memory of John W. Bixby

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Purpose: A scientific institution devoted to the growth and study of the native plants of California for their botanical, horticultural and popular features.

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MAIL ADDRESS

R. F. D., Anaheim, California

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Reissued without change of text, April, 1941